

# The Placer

A Voice of History

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## Director's Notes

*Jerry Rouillard*

### Clipper Gap School Celebrated

On October 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Placer County Historical Society's Landmark Committee recognized the Clipper Gap School by dedicating a plaque commemorating it as one of the County's historic sites. The 105 year-old single classroom school sits just off Interstate 80 at the Meadow Vista exit. Until the late 1940's, and the consolidation of the Placer Hills School District, it served the Clipper Gap School District. After students were transferred to Meadow Vista in 1950, the school building functioned as a community center until it was restored to its present condition in 1977 and became a Head Start program center; the purpose it continues to serve today.

The historical society's recognition of the Clipper Gap School is particularly important in that it helps illustrate a successful example of adaptive reuse, one of the most effective approaches to historic preservation. The Head Start Program leases the Clipper Gap School building from the County and operates its pre-school program as a social benefit of the community. By providing low cost quarters for this high

visibility program, the historic qualities of the school building are preserved, and the County has a practical justification for continuing to own and maintain the building. Everyone benefits, and the continued preservation of this historic location is far better assured than it would be if it had to rely on its historic value alone.

The lesson here is that historic preservation is important, but we live in a society in which "highest and best use," is most often interpreted in economic rather than historic terms." The Clipper Gap School is a case study in how we can marry history to practicality and thus avoid a confrontation between those sometimes conflicted values.

*Article continued on Page 6*



*Historic Picture of Clipper Gap School*

## Department Intelligence



### The Women's Jail

**Carmel Barry-Schweyer with help from Bob and Sharon Balmain and Mary Louise O'Neal**

*Continued from previous issue:*

In 1905 the Board of Supervisors authorized the construction of one or more cells for women and minor prisoners. On October 19, 1905, two weeks after the authorization, J.G. Bisbee began constructing the iron works of the new woman's jail under the steps at the north end of the courthouse. By December the grand jury reported that they "found 34 prisoners in the large room, five in iron cells and one colored woman in a separate apartment." The woman was 30-year-old Mamie Gardner in for grand larceny. They reported that the air was not good as a result of 34 men in the one room.

In October of 1910 the Board of Supervisors reported that a new jail away from the courthouse was not only desirable but also necessary, that the present jail at best was unhealthy, unsanitary and inadequate. The jail should not be a part of the courthouse and that \$40,000 was adequate for construction of a new jail. Bonds would be submitted for the next election on November 8, 1910.

The Grand Jury reported on the conditions of the "women's ward" and the "insane ward" in 1921:

*These we most emphatically condemn as being unsanitary, poorly ventilated and wholly beneath the dignity and respect of the people of Placer County to imprison any woman within such walls... The Supervisor's and Sheriff*

*have asked the people for the authority to build a jail, where they could provide respectable quarters for the women, the insane, and the juveniles and proper quarters for their prisoners.*

The Grand Jury went on to invite the people of the county to visit the jail themselves to see the deplorable conditions.

In 1923 more discussion regarding the jail and the need for a woman's ward and an insane ward appeared in the December 1923 grand Jury report:

*The committee recommends that a woman's ward and insane ward be provided by an addition to the south west corner of the main building adjacent to the rooms now occupied by the Sheriff.*

In 1935 the Board of Supervisors discussed with, Mr. Coffman, the architect who worked on the hospital, the cost of building a jail and hall of records. He estimated that a two-story building would be \$18,000 to \$20,000. In July of 1938 the board approved the purchase of the Beever property next to the courthouse for the jail site. The property had 100 feet frontage on Court Street and 80 feet on Maple Street and was 200 feet deep for \$1,200.00.

**Article will continue in the next issue of The Placer.**

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### From the Exhibit Division Joyce Eckman

On October 23rd, Frank Guerrero passed away. Frank worked for the Museums Department for the past 10 years. We will certainly miss his happy, friendly and helpful disposition.

Frank never said, "No," to any of the tasks we were assigned, no matter what the conditions were. We disassembled a two-story barn with livestock roaming around. We were able to save the wood from the second floor of the barn and use it in the Museums Sheriff's office. A work crew and we tried to save and old adobe building in Newcastle by building a frame around and over it and literally wrapping it up in tarps. We were on the roof, on the ladders and on the frame trying everything we knew to save this place. Frank, Phil Clark and I worked on several State Fair exhibits.

Frank loved to get his picture in the newspapers for his family and friends to see while working on the exhibit.

Frank helped me to clean, polish, decorate, build, remodel, tear down, load, unload and carry, at every one of the museums that belong to this County.

Frank was one of the 12 men who carried the body of the mud wagon into the museum during construction. The museum Gift Shop sales counter, the pre-history case, and the hall case near the fountain, were built by Frank, as well as, many oak components of the current gallery.

I could go on, but you already know how valuable Frank was to us, and will be dearly missed.♥

## Highlighted Events Here and There

### A Winter's Eve

*Dr. Lyndell Grey*

On December 8, 2002, the Old Fruitvale School will be re-inaugurated with *A Winter's Eve* event. We will honor the graduates. We will honor Bulgaria and the farmers of the "Farmer to Farmer" Exchange Program for their renovations to the schoolhouse.

We will dedicate the school building and museum to the founding students and their families. In honor of their ethnic heritage we will serve food and present customs from each country of our school's founders: Denmark, Italy, Portugal, Japan, and Great Britain. We will honor Bulgaria, as well, in recognition of our international friendship with this country. We respectfully request your participation in this event on Sunday, December 8, 2002 from 5 pm to 8 pm.

The Honorable Elena Poptodorova, Bulgarian Ambassador to the United States in Washington D.C. has accepted our invitation to be our honored guest. We also expect representation from the governments of Denmark, Italy, Portugal, Japan, and Great Britain.

We will have television and other media at this event. It will be a joyous occasion.

For more information, please contact Dr. Lyndell Grey at (916) 645-3517. ♠

### **Auburn-Placer County Library and Friends of the Library NOON Program Upcoming Presentations**

Glyneth Cassidy



The Auburn-Placer County Library and Friends of the Library provide a noon program guaranteed to inspire and entertain. All

programs, free to the public, are held in the Beecher Room of the Auburn-Placer Library on Nevada Street at noon. Guests are invited to bring a sack lunch, should they so desire. Beverages and cookies, provided by The Friends of the Library, are available for a nominal fee.

Rounding out the year will be "Sensational Music for Christmas," from the E.V. Cain School choirs under the direction of Patricia Leftridge. They will, again, perform for the public a variety of songs with traditional and unusual arrangements. This program will be presented on December 6<sup>th</sup> at noon.

For further information, please call (530) 888-6829. ♥

Interested in contributing to The Placer? Contact Alycia Alvarez at (530) 889-7705.

## Upcoming Events

### **November 23 & 24**

9 am to 4 pm, Gold Country Fairgrounds, Auburn  
*Mandarin Festival*

Free admission. Parking \$2.  
Contact (916) 663-1918

### **November 30**

6 pm, Downtown Auburn to Overlook Park  
*Festival of Lights Parade*

### **December 5**

6 pm, Downtown Lincoln  
*Christmas Parade and Tree Lighting*

Contact (916) 645-2035

### **December 7 & 8**

5 pm to 9 pm, Old Town Auburn  
*16<sup>th</sup> Annual Old Town Country Christmas*

Hayrides, bonfire, entertainment and visit from Santa.

### **January 11**

10 am to 3 pm, Maidu Interpretive Center  
*How to Tie a Mammoth*

Cordage Class. Fee \$31.  
Contact (916) 772-4242 for more information.

## Placer County Historical Organization News

### Placer County Historical Society's President's Message

George Lay

I am proud to announce that our new book "Placer County an Illustrated History" is now available. The project started four years ago in a joint venture with Heritage Publishing. Chuck Myer was chosen to be the author and photo editor. The 120 pages include a great narrative of the history up to WW11 as well as many photographs. It would be an ideal Christmas gift. The price is \$29.95 plus tax or \$25.00 plus tax for our members. Leave a message at 530-878-1927 for orders or stop at the museum gift shop on the first floor of the county courthouse. Also copies will be available at our Dec. 5th general meeting. *Please see Donna Howell's article for more information.* ♣

### New Members Welcomed

Barbara Burdick

The Placer County Historical Society would like to welcome the following new members:

Dan A. Johnson, Auburn  
Hugh W. Ewart, Auburn ♦

### Placer County Historical Society Dinner Meeting

Addah Owens

**When:** December 5, 2002  
**Time:** 6:30 pm, Dinner, 7:30 Program  
**Where:** Veteran's Memorial Hall, 100 East Street, Auburn, CA  
**Cost:** \$12.00  
**Menu:** Roast Turkey and Ham Dinner  
**Mail Check to:** PCHS, c/o Betty Samson, 8780 Baxter Grade Road, Auburn, CA 95603

#### **Program:**

Our speaker will be Jack Duncan who will present a program on the true locations of the four main east/west automobile roads and three wagon roads through Placer County and beyond.

Few who travel Interstate 80 in California are aware of the significance of the route over which they motor, a route that follows in general what used to be known as Old Highway 40, oftentimes called the Lincoln Highway but rarely called Victory Highway. The importance of the often forgotten Victory Highway will be described.

This slide show is based on research findings while writing the history book *To*

*Donner Pass from the Pacific.*

The book covers 150 years including wagon roads, and this presentation will primarily cover 89 years of automobile roads over the Sierra beginning in 1913.

A holiday musical presentation will be performed during our dinner. ♦



### New Placer County Book Donna Howell

The Placer County Historical Society announces the publication of a new book on Placer County. "Placer County Illustrated History," written by Chuck Myer is sponsored by the historical society. An overview of local events to WW II, the book features many photos, is hard bound and would make an excellent Christmas gift.

The society is hosting an author's book signing on Saturday, November 16, from 1 to 3 pm in the Courthouse Museum. You can purchase your book in the gift shop and have Chuck sign it. Refreshments will be served. ♠

# Placer County Historical Organizations

Roseville Historical Society  
Dean Moore, 773-3003  
557 Lincoln St.  
Roseville, CA 95678  
[www.rosevillehistorical.org](http://www.rosevillehistorical.org)

Forest Hill Divide Historical  
Society  
Gerda Percival, 367-2366  
PO Box 646  
Foresthill, CA 95631-0646  
[www.foresthillhistory.org](http://www.foresthillhistory.org)

Lincoln Highway Association  
[www.lincolnhighwayassoc.com](http://www.lincolnhighwayassoc.com)

Golden Drift Historical Society  
Doug Ferrier, 389-2617  
PO Box 20  
Dutch Flat, CA 95714-0020

Placer County Genealogical  
Society  
Joyce House, President  
PO Box 7385  
Auburn, CA 95604  
[www.pcgenes.com](http://www.pcgenes.com)

Colfax Area Historical Society  
Helen Wayland, 346-7040  
PO Box 185  
Colfax, CA 95713-0185  
[www.foothill.net/colfax/history](http://www.foothill.net/colfax/history)

Maidu Interpretive Center  
Kristie Stevens Bungard,  
916-772-4242  
1960 Johnson Ranch Drive  
Roseville, CA 95661  
[www.micf.net](http://www.micf.net)

Placer County Historical Society  
George Lay, 878-1927  
PO Box 5643  
Auburn, CA 95604  
[www.placercountyhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.placercountyhistoricalsociety.org)

Rocklin Historical Society Ted  
Bravos, 916-624-5404  
PO Box 752  
Rocklin, CA 95677-0752  
[www.rocklinhistory.org](http://www.rocklinhistory.org)

Loomis Basin Historical Society  
Alice Barnes, 916-652-7844  
PO Box 2195  
Loomis, CA 95659-2195

Friends of Griffith Quarry  
Shirley Patocka, 916-663-3681  
PO Box 326  
Penryn, CA 95663-0326

Joss House Museum  
885-9446  
200 Sacramento St.  
Auburn, CA 95604

Fruitvale Hall School  
Association  
3425 Fruitvale Road  
Lincoln, CA 95648

## Artifact in the Spotlight

*Alycia Alvarez*

The Placer County Department of Museums Collections has a large and exceptional hat collection. One of the highlights of this collection (and a fairly recent acquisition) is a Mallory Fedora with a World War II ceiling price tag issued by the Office of Price Administration. The price was regulated by the government to be no higher than \$8.50. Although the hat is in excellent condition, the ceiling price tag reflects its true historical value as a symbol of what our greatest generation endured on the home front.

To prevent wartime inflation, the Office of Price Administration (OPA) was established. The OPA issued price controls on most commodities, rent, and, eventually, 90% of retail food. The OPA also rationed scarce consumer goods (tires, automobiles, sugar, gasoline, fuel, oil, coffee, meats and processed foods). At the end of the war, rationing was abandoned and ceiling prices were abolished.

Rationing and price controls resulted in an extensive black market and widespread public discontent.

The Placer County Historical Society maintains a wonderful website with a great amount of Placer County History. The following article is just one of many that can be found on [www.placercountyhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.placercountyhistoricalsociety.org)

## Rattlesnake Dick

Of the many colorful characters Auburn's early history, none have attracted more interest than Richard Barter, who gained fame as the outlaw, Rattlesnake Dick, although he is purported to have preferred the more romantic pseudonym of "Pirate of the Placers". He was not known to have killed anyone, but he terrorized the Sierra foothills over three years from 1856 to 1859. The following sketch of this "Pirate of the Placers" is from several publications: Thompson & West 1882 History of Placer Co.; a publication issued shortly after his death; Placer Herald article, May 27, 1944 by Harry Furlong; information from Bob Elder from his book about Rattlesnake Dick; and the article "Unanswered Questions—Rattlesnake Dick's Death, by Norman McLeod in the Sunday Magazine section of the Auburn Journal, May 4, 1986; and the Placer Gold, May 30, 1973 article, "Who Really Killed Rattlesnake Dick?"

"Rattlesnake Dick", was the son of an English Colonel and was born in Quebec about the

year 1833, but very little is known of his early history. Dick was a roving, reckless sort of a boy, not exactly bad, but decidedly "wild." He was caught in the great maelstrom that whirled around California after the discovery of gold and came to the State during 1850, accompanied by an elder brother and an old man supposed to have been a relation. They settled at Rattlesnake Bar, a small mining camp in Placer County, on the North Fork of the American River. Later his brother and the old man returned to Canada. Dick stayed on at Rattlesnake Bar, working for other men and doing a little prospecting on his own when rumors began arriving from Nevada City to the effect those rich quartz deposits had been found in the mountains. Many of the American River miners packed their gear and left. But not Dick Barter. Going from saloon to saloon, he bragged that his river bar was the best settlement in the placers. The older miners looked on Dick with amusement. "There goes Rattlesnake Dick", they would say. This was the turning point in his life. Thrown as he was, among scenes and men so different from any of his previous associations, he fell into the evil courses that eventually ended in his tragic death.

The rest of his story can be found in the Placer County Historical Society booklet, "Infamous Crimes and Criminals in Placer County."

The 1904 Adolph Weber murder case is also detailed. (Visit the Museum Gift Shop or [placercountyhistoricalsociety.org](http://placercountyhistoricalsociety.org) for more information.) There is also a plaque at the corner of Foresthill Road and East Lincoln Way commemorating the poetess "Eulalie" and the Junction House, which was near where Rattlesnake Dick's body was found. Dick is buried in the Old Auburn District Cemetery off of Fulweiler Avenue in Auburn. ♦

## Director's Notes Continued from Page 1

Congratulations to the Landmark Committee for highlighting this success story. Their plaque program is an effective way of promoting historic preservation, and they deserve our recognition and support for the hard work they put into it. The members of this committee are; Chairperson Doris Viera; Howard Fleming, Rose Ford, Richard Hubbard, Gayle Russell, and Gene Scott. ♣



Historic Picture of Clipper Gap School

# Calendar of Events

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## November

- |                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| November 27, 9 am       | Day Before Thanksgiving Parade in Downtown Loomis<br>200 Free Flags. Contact (916) 652-8441.   |
| November 28, 12 pm-3 pm | Community Thanksgiving Dinner at the Gold Country<br>Fairgrounds in Auburn. Everyone welcome. Contact<br>(916) 823-4211 ext. 126 for more information. |
| November 28-29          | Placer County Department of Museums closed for<br>Thanksgiving.  |
| November 29, 5 pm       | Stars for Children at the Placer County Nature Center.<br>Admission \$5. Contact (530) 878-6053.   |
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## December

- |                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| December 2, 9 am | Decorate the Bernhard. Placer County Department of<br>Museums Docents and Staff are invited to come decorate<br>the Bernhard for the holiday season. Contact (530) 889-<br>7705. |
| December 4       | Christmas in the Village in Downtown Meadow Vista.<br>Cookies, cider, and gifts. Contact (530) 878-1311.   |
| December 8       | Christmas in Coloma. Historic 1850s period crafts,<br>strolling magicians, and wreath making. Contact<br>(530) 622-3470.   |
| December 25      | Placer County Department of Museums closed for<br>Christmas.   |

